

# Discover pristine beauty of Sangdeh Forest in Mazandaran Province

## Iranica Desk

If you're looking for a picturesque stroll, consider a visit to the pristine forests of Savadkuh in Mazandaran Province, particularly Sangdeh Forest. Walking through the enchanting beech forest, breathing in the fresh forest air, and listening to the melodious singing of the birds can help you forget the fatigue of daily work and activities.

Sangdeh Forest, with its towering trees reaching up to 40 meters high, is a top destination for nature enthusiasts and tourists. Situated near the village of the same name, this beech forest is a pristine attraction for nature tourism and sightseeing.

The journey to Sangdeh village, surrounded by mountains and forests, is as beautiful, vibrant, and joyful as the village itself. From the village to the start of the forest hiking trail, the dirt road can be navigated using local vehicles. Along the trail, you'll encounter tall beech trees arranged in a special pattern, with the ground blanketed in red and yellow leaves, creating an indescribably beautiful autumn landscape.

The forest is home to a diverse array of trees, shrubs, vegetation, animals, and microorganisms (including fungi, bacteria, and viruses), along with non-living natural elements such as soil, water, temperature, and wind, all of which have combined to create a unique and recognizable environment and habitat. In natural forests, trees of various sizes grow in irregular patterns, and self-growing herbs are plentiful. The forest's veg-

etation moderates the climate and contributes to rain through evaporation and transpiration, with almost three percent of the Earth's rain attributed to forests.

The trees in Sangdeh Forest are part of the ancient Hyrcanian forest, which dates back to the Jurassic period, some 40 million years ago. This region was known as Hyrcania (meaning "land of wolves" in ancient times).

The wood of the beech tree, abundant in Iranian forests, is used for a variety of purposes, including building rural homes and producing various items. While relatively rare in the plains, beech trees are abundant in the forests and highlands. Pure beech forests can be found in Gilan and Mazandaran provinces, at altitudes of over 2,000 meters above sea level. The shade-tolerant beech tree boasts abundant branches and leaves.

Young beech saplings are vulnerable to severe cold, particularly spring frost, which can destroy their leaves. Excessive heat is also detrimental to their growth. While not thriving in cold areas, beech trees yield better results in warmer regions. With shallow roots, they are suitable for forests with thin and calcareous soils.

In dense forests, beech trees bear fruit from sixty to eighty years of age, while in open spaces, they bear fruit from forty to fifty years. In fertile soil they bear fruit every five or six years, and in unfavorable weather, they bear fruit every fifteen years. The fruit of this tree contains five to seven percent oil. The trunk of the beech

tree can grow very large, reaching up to 35 meters in height, with a diameter of one and a half meters.

Beech trees have a lifespan of 200 to 250 years. Their wood is used for making doors, windows, railway sleepers, tables, chairs, sofas, chests, and more, and its consumption is higher than other woods. Fine and good-quality silk fabrics are made from its cellulose, and its charcoal is of high quality.

Near the forest there are several other attractions and natural landmarks in Mazandaran Province that are worth visiting, including Lake Shurmast, Arfaa Deh Forest, and the stargazing site in Alasht. We recommend that if you have time, definitely visit these attractions as well.

The Sangdeh forest can provide a memorable experience for people with different tastes. The forest offers various enjoyable activities, including the following:

Special facilities are not provided in the forest area. Therefore, you are recommended to prepare your necessities before the trip, or in the village of Sangdeh, and consider the necessary arrangements for your other needs (such as drinking water, sanitary services, etc.) in advance.

If you plan to stay overnight in Sangdeh Forest, you have two options: The first option is camping, which is only recommended for experienced people. For this purpose, be sure to bring a tent, sleeping bag, dry food, a first-aid kit, and other necessary camping equipment. The second option is staying in eco-lodges and rural houses.



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## Reviving gachmeh-weaving, a boon for culture and economy of Boyer-Ahmad

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*Gachmeh-bafi* (gachmeh-weaving) is an exclusive handicraft of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, combining the arts of kilim and carpet weaving. This beautiful and enduring art is the product of the skilled tribeswomen of the region. The process involves weaving the edge and pattern using the carpet-weaving method after the warping.

The tribes of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province use gachmeh for underlay and decoration of their tents and houses, making the handicraft production an important economic and employment opportunity for its weavers. The market for gachmeh is thriving, and it holds a special significance in the region.

The art of gachmeh-weaving was founded by a woman named Naneh Ghol Ghol in the city of Sepidar during the Qajar era. Her legacy lives on, and with the establishment of weaving workshops as well as



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paying loans, and granting of licenses to enthusiasts, gachmeh-weaving has flourished in the city of Boyer-Ahmad.

The raw materials for gachmeh-weaving include wool yarn for the weft, cotton yarn for the warp, and dye, while the weaving tools include a kilim weaving comb and a knife. This newly born art is indicative of the taste and richness of the tra-

ditions and customs of the inhabitants of the land, and it has become a valuable hand-woven product of Boyer-Ahmad.

### Resuscitating gachmeh-weaving

Kazem Rahmani, head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of the city of Boyer-Ahmad, stated that gachmeh-weaving is an



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indigenous and authentic art form, which was revitalized in the past years.

He highlighted the significance of registering gachmeh-weaving on Iran's National Heritage List, adding that the establishment of four gachmeh-weaving workshops is an important initiative taken by the government to revive this art.

Rahmani mentioned that 100

gachmeh-weaving enthusiasts in Boyer-Ahmad have received training, with 20 of them actively involved in the production of this handicraft. He emphasized that providing training courses and offering permits, and low-interest loans are integral parts of the program devised for supporting the handicraft.

In addition, he noted that a to-

tal of 16,000 artisans active in the handicraft sector have been identified in Boyer-Ahmad, with 12,000 of them holding the necessary permits.

Deputy head of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization Mehrnosh Behniazadeh said the production of gachmeh is limited, but some quantities of this product are exported to foreign countries.

She emphasized that many Iranian consumer goods are manufactured using foreign products, and stressed the importance of promoting the cultural value of Iranian handicrafts, such as gachmeh, to encourage their widespread use among the population.

The official mentioned that these handmade products are shipped to foreign countries from other provinces. Additionally, they are showcased and sold at domestic exhibitions in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province at the national level.